



Anthrax

(malignant edema; Woolsorters' disease)

What is anthrax?

Anthrax is a bacterial disease that can infect all warm-blooded animals including man.

Who is at risk for anthrax?

Anthrax is primarily an occupational disease. It is occasionally identified in individuals who are exposed to dead animals and animal products such as wool and hair.

What are the symptoms of anthrax?

The symptoms vary depending upon the type of exposure. With skin exposure, a boil-like lesion appears which eventually forms a black center. A swelling of the lymph gland under the arm may occur. With respiratory exposure, symptoms may resemble the common cold and may progress to severe breathing problems and even death.

How soon do symptoms appear?

The incubation period is usually within seven days.

How is anthrax spread?

The anthrax bacteria can live in the soil for many years. Man may become infected with anthrax by inhaling contaminated soil particles or by handling wool or hair from diseased animals. Infection of the intestinal tract can occur by eating undercooked meat from diseased animals.

When and for how long is a person able to spread the disease?

There are no reports of the disease spreading from human to human.

How is a person diagnosed?

Consult a health care professional.

What is the treatment?

Penicillin is the drug of choice but tetracycline may also be prescribed.

Does past infection make a person immune?

A second attack with this disease is unlikely.

Should children or others be excluded from day care, school, work or other activities if they have anthrax?

No, because at this point it is not proven that anthrax can spread from person to person. Although, if the child is unable to participate without staff feeling like they may be jeopardizing the health and/or safety of other children in the group, then they should be excluded.

What can be done to prevent the spread of anthrax?

Anthrax vaccine is available for people in high-risk occupations. To prevent anthrax, carefully handle dead animals suspected of having anthrax; provide good ventilation when processing hides, fur, hair or wool; and vaccinate animals.

Additional Information:

Is available at [\(NDWEBSITE\)](#) or by calling the North Dakota Department of Health at 800.472.2180.

[for reportable conditions only] **This disease is a reportable condition. As mandated by North Dakota law, any incidence of this disease shall be reported to the North Dakota Department of Health.**

Resource: American Academy of Pediatrics. [chapter title]. In: Pickering LK, ed. *Red Book: 2003 Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases*. 26th ed. Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics; 2003:[page number]